

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

13/54

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

OSD REVIEW COMPLETED.

President Nixon
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Amb. Kenneth Rush, Deputy Secretary of State
William Clements, Deputy Secretary of Defense
William Colby, Director, CIA
Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff
Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for
Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
Major General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

JCS review(s) completed.

DATE AND TIME:

Wednesday - October 17, 1973
4:00 p. m.

SUBJECT:

WSAG Principals: Middle East War
MORI/CDF per C03195557

President: I want to thank you all for your efforts.

No one is more keenly aware of the stakes: Oil and our strategic position.

We can't go down the road to a ceasefire without a negotiating effort which will succeed. The purpose of the meeting this morning [with four Arab Foreign Ministers] was to contribute to this. Some of these -- not the Algerians-- are desperately afraid of being left at the mercy of the Soviet Union. The Saudis, Moroccans, and even the Algerians, fear this. The other aspect is our relations with the Soviet Union. This is bigger than the Middle East. We can't allow a Soviet-supported operation to succeed against an American-supported operations. If it does, our credibility everywhere is severely shaken.

We went through this with India and Pakistan. I told the Foreign Ministers that Israel can play the press, but they should know that in the India-Pakistan war, the public was pro-Indian and I supported Pakistan not because it was popular but because it was right.

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In order to have the influence we need to bring Israel to a settlement, we have to have their confidence. That is why this airlift. You remember, Tom [Moorer], that before Cambodia, Westy said we need only go for Parrot's Beak, and I said take it all.

I know the seallift is controversial but we must be credible. I want it to go forward. Our diplomacy will probably work before it gets there, but we must get the message to Israel and to the Soviet Union. We can't get so much to them that they will be arrogant, but we can't be in the position where Israel puts pressure on Congress for us to do more.

Kissinger: They have a good plan.

President: Then do it.

Kissinger: Mr. President, this has been the best-run crisis since you have been in the White House. We have launched a massive airlift yet we have gotten only a small bitch in TASS and you stand here getting Arab compliments in the Rose Garden.

President: There is still lots of danger. There are lots of units in that area. The Soviets have got to choose: Will they risk our whole relationship in order to test us in the Middle East? They have got to know we won't be pushed around in our support of any nation anywhere. The second point is that we have to do enough to have a bargaining position to bring Israel kicking and screaming to the table.

Kissinger: As the Soviet Union is doing now with Egypt.

President: I know one problem is our NATO friends. We are going to go ahead and do it. It is very important that DOD be just as effective on the seallift as on the airlift.

Moorer: Portugal is the only place to land and the crosswind can halt everything. Ten years ago we had bases everywhere.

President: We have to rethink that, and we won't forget the Portuguese.

We are not out of the woods, but we should know in a few days.

Clements: Your military services have just reacted in an outstanding fashion, Mr. President.

President: So have you all. Thank you very much.

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